

## THE DAILY SHORT STORY

### The Christmas Burglar.

I am a bold, bad burglar. What's more, I am a Christmas burglar. That is, I make an annual crib cracking trip at about that cheerful time of the year, because then everything in my line seems so plentiful. The job this year was a cinch, in spite of the policeman on the beat. He was so stunned that he forgot to report the affair to the newspapers. I'll have to tell you about it.

First let me say that Christmas eve is a bad time for a burglar to be stealing across the floor of a crib in the dark; for one creak of a loose board, or a collision with a Christmas tree is liable to start some wee voice inquiring, "Is that you, Santa?" "Have you come, St. Nicholas?" Or, one tread upon a squeaking toy is sure to upset the household's nerves as well as your own.

But last Christmas I got into a two-story flat where everything worked lovely, until I crept up to the upper hall front. Then I drew back abruptly, as confused voices broke from the other side of a door.

This was disconcerting. Nevertheless, I clapped my eyes on a rack which stood near a hall window. In the moonlight which streamed in I observed hanging there a man's fur-lined coat and cap. Now it was a cold night outside and it was snowing hard. So in a jiffy I had made an uneven exchange and started to retrace my way to the lower floor. But hardly a foot of the way was trav-

ersed, when the door of the discordant room burst open and a perturbed man hurried out, slipped into my dilapidated cap and coat, and ran down the stairs in high dudgeon.

As I crouched in the hall corner a full minute of anxious silence elapsed. Then another form emerged quickly from that room to peer down the stairs.

"Billee!" she softly called; "Billee, come back and I won't quarrel with you any more. Are you down there, Billee?"

But Billee had gone. With a stifled sob she fumbled over my head; and the next instant the hall was flooded with light.

"Oh! how you scared me!" she exclaimed, starting back in palpable fright, as I stood before her in Billee's hat and coat.

Then her eyes flashed fire.

"I thought I told you to go!" were her next words, giving me but one quick glance and switching her fine eyes off. "What are you waiting for—the diamond brooch, the rings, and the \$200 you gave me this morning?"

For a moment I was up in the air. Recovering, I nodded with bad grace.

In response my pretty young discoverer ran into the apartment. A hasty rumaging of bureau drawers and desk pigeon holes followed, after which she reappeared with several glittering pieces that fairly made my eyes water.

"It only shows how despicable you are," she said, slapping each one into my waiting hands.